

Amendments to Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of assigning leads to a recipient, the method comprising:
 - receiving a lead from a potential customer;
 - determining a plurality of recipients;
 - generating a link that is placed in an email; [[and]]
 - distributing the email to the plurality of recipients; and
 - ~~wherein the link is generated such that a first recipient to access the link is assigned the lead~~
 - assigning the lead to a first recipient to access the link.
2. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein all subsequent recipients to access the link are notified that the first recipient has been assigned the lead.
3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of determining a plurality of recipients comprises the steps of:
 - assigning a rating to each recipient; and
 - using the assigned ratings to determine a plurality of recipients.
4. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 3, wherein the step of assigning a rating to each recipient uses an algorithm to determine and assign the rating for each recipient.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 4, wherein the algorithm determines and assigns each rating based upon at least one among ~~uses factors selected from~~ a location of the recipient in relation to the potential customer; a product mix sold by the recipient; a number of leads the recipient has received previously; a diligence of the recipient; a percentage of previous leads that resulted in a sale; and a percentage of previous sales that included additional items; ~~and a combination thereof.~~

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of generating the link that is placed in the email comprises the steps of:

- assigning a lead identification to the lead;
- assigning a unique identification for each of the plurality of recipients;
- generating a secret code;
- manipulating each unique identification with the secret code; and
- adding a trigger.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the secret code comprises alphanumeric characters.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the secret code is randomly generated.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the secret code includes at least one number and each unique identification is manipulated by multiplying each unique identification with a number in the secret code.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the method assigns the lead to the first recipient to access the link through the steps of:

verifying the trigger;
reversing the step of manipulating each unique identification with the secret code to obtain the unique identification of the first recipient;
comparing the lead identification, the unique identification of the first recipient, and the secret code with a database;
determining whether any unique identification has been associated with the lead identification; and
associating the unique identification of the first recipient with the lead identification if no unique identification has already been associated with the lead identification, thereby assigning the lead to the first recipient.

11. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable storage having stored thereon, a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

receiving a lead from a potential customer;
determining a plurality of recipients;
generating a link that is placed in an email; [[and]]
distributing the email to the plurality of recipients; and
~~wherein the link is generated such that a first recipient to access the link is assigned the lead~~
assigning the lead to a first recipient to access the link.

12. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 11, wherein all subsequent recipients to access the link are notified that the first recipient has been assigned the lead.

13. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 11, wherein the step of determining a plurality of recipients comprises the steps of:

assigning a rating to each recipient; and
using the assigned ratings to determine a plurality of recipients.

14. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable storage of Claim 13, wherein the step of assigning a rating to each recipient uses an algorithm to determine and assign the rating for each recipient.

15. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable storage of Claim 14, wherein the algorithm determines and assigns each rating based upon at least one among ~~uses factors selected from~~ a location of the recipient in relation to the potential customer; a product mix sold by the recipient; a number of leads the recipient has received previously; a diligence of the recipient; a percentage of previous leads that resulted in a sale; and a percentage of previous sales that included additional items; ~~and a combination thereof~~

16. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 11, wherein the step of generating the link that is placed in the email comprises the steps of:

assigning a lead identification to the lead;
assigning a unique identification for each of the plurality of recipients;
generating a secret code;
manipulating each unique identification with the secret code; and
adding a trigger.

17. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 16, wherein the secret code comprises alphanumeric characters.

18. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 16, wherein the secret code is randomly generated.

19. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 16, wherein the secret code includes at least one number and each unique identification is manipulated by multiplying each unique identification with a number in the secret code.

20. (Original) The machine-readable storage of Claim 16, wherein the machine-readable storage assigns the lead to the first recipient to access the link through the steps of:

verifying the trigger;

reversing the step of manipulating each unique identification with the secret code to obtain the unique identification of the first recipient;

comparing the lead identification, the unique identification of the first recipient, and the secret code with a database;

determining whether any unique identification has been associated with the lead identification; and

associating the unique identification of the first recipient with the lead identification if no unique identification has already been associated with the lead identification, thereby assigning the lead to the first recipient.

21. (Currently Amended) A system of assigning leads to a recipient comprising:

a receiving mechanism for receiving a lead from a potential customer;

a system determining mechanism for determining a plurality of recipients;

a link-generating mechanism for generating a link that is placed in an email;

[[and]]

a distribution mechanism for distributing the email to the plurality of recipients;

and

~~wherein the link is generated such that a first recipient to access the link is assigned the lead~~ a lead-assigning mechanism for assigning the lead to a first recipient to access the link

22. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim ~~[[22]]~~ 21, wherein all subsequent recipients to access the link are notified that the first recipient has been assigned the lead.

23. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 21, wherein the link-generating mechanism for generating the link that is placed in the email comprises:

- a system for assigning a lead identification to the lead;
- a mechanism for assigning a unique identification for each of the plurality of recipients;
- a generating mechanism for generating a secret code;
- a mechanism for manipulating each unique identification with the secret code; and
- a mechanism for adding a trigger.

24. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim ~~[[23]]~~, wherein the ~~system~~ lead-assigning mechanism assigns the lead to the first recipient to access the link through:

- a system for verifying the trigger;
- a system for reversing the manipulation of each unique identification with the secret code to obtain the unique identification of the first recipient;
- a system for comparing the lead identification, the unique identification of the first recipient, and the secret code with a database;
- a determination system for determining whether any unique identification has been associated with the lead identification; and

an association mechanism for associating the unique identification of the first recipient with the lead identification if no unique identification has already been associated with the lead identification, thereby assigning the lead to the first recipient.